



# Rensselaer Public Library

Est. 1898  
Your Community Library.

## Rensselaer Public Library

### 2020 PLAN

*Approved December 4, 2017*

**Library Director:** Jane Chirgwin

**Library Trustees:**

- Johanna Burnham, President
- Marianne Ogren, Secretary
- Tobi Freebern
- Annette Sebuyira
- Mary Lou Knox

**Upper Hudson Library System staff:**

- Tim Burke, Executive Director
- Mary Fellows, Youth and Family Services Manager

**Librarians and Library Aides:**

Caroline Leising, Nicolle Manning, Hannah Ricotilli, Lilly Fitzgerald, Angela Kanser, Shantel Ellis

**Mission Statement:**

The Rensselaer Public Library serves as a community center for lifelong learning and provides services and materials in a safe and positive environment to meet the informational, educational, cultural and recreational needs of the City of Rensselaer, NY and its surrounding area.

**Introduction**

In 2017, the Library Board approved action to create a new long range plan. The Library's previous plan covered the period of 2012-2016. The Board decided to change the range of time to three years, and seek the input of the community, under the advice of Library System Director Tim Burke.

The Rensselaer Public Library serves the city of Rensselaer in Rensselaer County. The most recent census population is 9,392, and is projected to be around 9,531 in 2020 by the Capital District Regional Planning Commission. The library moved to its current location at 676 East Street in 2009. It is a municipal library and is considered a department of the city. The library budget is approved by the city's Common Council. Currently the library has one full-time employee, the Library Director, with 6 part-time employees.

**Library Evaluation and Community Input**

The Library put out a survey in paper and online, receiving 99 responses over the course of the summer of 2017. A focus group session was held in August. In September, a second survey was conducted at the school with parents and teachers, with 39 responses.

Community input revealed that many were not aware of all the library's services, and focus group members felt that events could be better advertised. The community was critical of the Library's poor building and grounds upkeep, rapid turn-over of staff, and poor communication to local government and city residents. Respondents said they would like to see movie showings, crafts, evening events for families, computer classes and science programs. Parents and teachers want the public library to be a component of their student's education.

Library staff participated in a discussion of the library's strengths and weaknesses. Key areas to work on were identified as improving attendance at events, keeping skilled staff, and finding ways to make being sandwiched between two large, well-funded libraries work to the library's advantage.

The Library Board discussed the library's strengths and weaknesses. Key areas to work on were identified as improving communication with the city's Common Council, increasing staff salaries to retain skilled employees, and providing library programs that were popular with the community.

The Rensselaer Library Board approved the following goals, objectives and action steps at their December 2017 meeting to be their priorities from January 2018 to December 2020. The plan will be evaluated each year in January to see what progress has been made and whether to change strategies.

## **2020 Plan overview**

- 1. Library known and used by whole community**
- 2. Provide great events**
- 3. Keep skilled library employees**

## **Goal #1 Increase awareness and usage of the library**

- Effectively advertise services to community
  - Send press releases, school flyers and mailings about events and services
  - Maintain a social media presence with regular postings, website updates
  - Collaborate with Rensselaer School District to get flyers to students
- Increase communication with City government
  - Provide monthly report to Common Council by Trustees and Director on rotating schedule.
  - Meet with budget committee about budget proposal and request secondary meeting for any proposed changes
  - Work with Friends of the Library to attend neighborhood functions
- Improve Library's appearance and collection
  - Meet with city DPW about poor landscaping maintenance
  - Start and keep up-to-date building maintenance log
  - Curate library collection

## **Goal #2 Provide educational and entertaining events as a hub of our community**

- Director schedules tentative list of child/adult events for the full year to allow for advanced planning
- Use survey input to try out new events
  - Ask for participant opinions at end of event
  - Create surveys asking for event suggestions on annual basis
- Collaborate with school, local libraries and community organizations for shared events
- Provide digital literacy training for adults and STEAM events for children and teens

## **Goal #3 Keep skilled library employees**

- Provide competitive wages, reaching \$14 /hr minimum by 2020
  - Campaign to city hall for competitive wages
  - Research alternative funding ideas
- Provide training and experience
  - Utilize UHLS training opportunities
  - Provide in-house training (webinars, classes, local events)
  - Ensure staff schedule allows for training
  - Start annual staff development day

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